



State of Connecticut

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES STATE CAPITOL

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Environmental Committee Public Hearing

Friday, March 7, 2014

Testimony in Support of, House Bill 5415, An Act Concerning the Air Line State Park Trail Honored Chairs, Ranking Members and Members of the Environmental Committee

Thank you for considering House Bill 5415. I offer the following testimony in favor of this proposal.

Please support H.B. 5415, An Act Concerning the Air Line Trail, which seeks to preserve the historic and natural value of this important piece of land. For many in Portland and throughout the State of Connecticut, this trail is an important part of our history. In the nineteenth century, the trail was a railroad between the cities of Boston and New York.

However, while I support the bill, I object strongly to the term "eminent domain" in the proposed bill language and urge the committee to strike "eminent domain" out of the bill.

Modern history has transformed the trail into an opportunity for people in the community to enjoy the outdoors and exercise. Thus, the Air Line Trail has become a means by which we can promote healthier lifestyles through physical activity. These activities help prevent heart disease, diabetes, osteoporosis, obesity, colon cancer and depression. An increase in physical activity can save millions for our state in health care spending. Physical activity also reduces stress and improves mental health. Therefore, it has been a priority of mine to promote and facilitate outdoor recreation.

Also, such trails provide an economic boom to our communities. We strive to promote tourism and this is an opportunity. A surge in visitors brings dollars that are in turn spent on local restaurants, accommodations, retail purchases, and day trips. The economic potential behind the trail is tremendous, not only for Portland but for Connecticut.

It is my hope that we can come together to pass this legislation which both protects the natural beauty of our state's dwindling rural areas, advances our economy, promotes tourism and balances the rights of property owners.

Thank you for your consideration and please support H.B. 5415.

Christie Carpino, State Representative, 32nd District